

Appl. No. : 10/665,693
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REMARKS

Claims 1-23 are currently pending. Claims 1, 10, and 14 are amended herein.

Claim Amendment

Claim 14 has been amended solely for the purpose of correcting typographical errors.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §102

Claims 1-23 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Yonemitsu et al., U.S. Patent No. 6,143,083. Applicants respectfully disagree that Claims 1-23 are anticipated by Yonemitsu et al. Nevertheless, independent Claims 1 and 10 have been amended to clarify that the buffer station is separate from the loadlock chamber. These amendments are fully supported by the specification, as originally filed, at, for example, Figure 1 and paragraph [0038].

Yonemitsu et al. do not disclose a front docking port located on an outside surface of the first substrate handling chamber, a loadlock chamber joined to the first substrate handling chamber and a buffer station adjacent the first substrate handling chamber and separate from the loadlock chamber, the buffer station begin purged with an inert internal environment separate from the first substrate handling chamber, the buffer station having a rack defining multiple shelves for holding substrates, as recited in amended independent Claims 1 and 10. Similarly, Yonemitsu et al. do not disclose or suggest a front docking port located on an outside surface of the substrate handling chamber, as recited in independent Claim 14.

The Examiner points to a “loadlock chamber 30” and a “buffer station rack 5.” However, Applicants respectfully submit that reference numeral “5” in Yonemitsu et al. is a wafer. In Yonemitsu et al., the intermediate wafer holding chamber 30 has a wafer holder 40 with supporting plates. Thus, if the Yonemitsu et al. wafer holder 40 corresponds to the claimed buffer station rack, then the Yonemitsu et al. wafer holding chamber 30 would correspond to the claimed buffer station, not the claimed loadlock chamber. The Yonemitsu et al. wafer holding chamber 30 is adjacent a wafer transfer chamber 50 having a robot, but Yonemitsu et al. do not disclose or suggest a separate loadlock chamber joined to the wafer transfer chamber 50, as recited in amended Claims 1 and 10. If the Yonemitsu et al. wafer holding chamber 30 corresponds to the claimed loadlock chamber, Applicants respectfully submit that Yonemitsu et

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al. do not disclose or suggest a separate buffer station adjacent the first substrate handling chamber, as recited in amended Claims 1 and 10. Furthermore, the Examiner points to reference numeral "700" in Yonemitsu et al. as the front docking port. In Yonemitsu et al., "700" is the *processing* section containing processing chambers, not a front docking port located on an outside surface of the substrate handling chamber, as recited in Claims 1, 10, and 14. In Yonemitsu et al., "100" is the front section containing the front door valve 91, which is located on the outside surface of the wafer holding chamber 30, not the chamber 50 (which corresponds to the claimed substrate handling chamber) in which a robot arm 60 is located.

Claims 1, 10, and 14 are therefore patentable as they are not anticipated by Yonemitsu et al. Claims 2-9, 11-13, and 15-23, which depend from and include all of the limitations of Claim 1, 10, or 14 are therefore also patentable over Yonemitsu et al.

Conclusion

Applicants respectfully submit that all of the pending claims are patentably distinguishable over the prior art of record. The cited references, either alone or in combination, do not teach or suggest Applicants' claimed invention.

Please charge any additional fees, including any fees for additional extension of time, or credit overpayment to Deposit Account No. 11-1410.

Respectfully submitted,

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AMEND

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